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SUBJECT: SCA DAS FEIGENBAUM DISCUSSES CHINESE AND RUSSIAN
ROLES IN CENTRAL ASIA WITH MOFA

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Classified By: Charge d'Affaires, a.i., Joseph R. Donovan. Reasons 1.4
(B) (D)

¶1. (C) Summary. On December 7, on the margins of a U.S.-Japan Dialogue on Central Asia, SCA DAS Evan Feigenbaum assessed the challenges presented by Russian and Chinese policies in the region with MOFA European Affairs Bureau Russia Division Director Kuninori Matsuda. Feigenbaum stressed that a key goal of U.S. policy in Central Asia was to support the sovereignty and independence of the countries in the area. U.S. policy strived, therefore, to create as many options as possible and thus to be "anti-monopoly," not anti-Russian. Matsuda said that Japan's policy aimed to pursue the Japan Plus Central Asia Dialogue mechanism, while assuaging Russian sensitivities about Japan's involvement in the region. Japan was exploring ways to bring Russia into the dialogue between Central Asia and Japan. Matsuda also noted that Tokyo planned to develop a Vice Minister level Strategic Dialogue with Russia. He asked for U.S. suggestions of possible topics the two sides might discuss as part of this newly inaugurated strategic dialogue. Tokyo also planned to raise concerns about Russia's weapons trade with India and Southeast Asia. End Summary

¶2. (C) Asked by Matsuda about U.S. attitudes toward Russia in Central Asia, Feigenbaum drew on a theme presented throughout his meetings with Japanese officials. Feigenbaum stressed that a key goal of U.S. policy in Central Asia was to support the sovereignty and independence of the countries in the area by helping to provide them with as many options in as many directions on the compass as possible. More options, said Feigenbaum, would promote increased independence by offering alternatives for trade with

neighboring states and the global economy. U.S. policy strived to be anti-monopoly, not anti-Russian. Feigenbaum also gave a brief overview of the administration's rationale for transferring responsibility for Central Asia from EUR to SCA.

13. (C) Noting the similarities between U.S. and Japanese goals and approaches, Matsuda said that Central Asia's history as part of the former Soviet Union tended to cause observers to view Central Asia through the prism of the old USSR. However, it was important that the U.S. and Japan begin to view the region not only from Russia's vantage point, but from China's perspective as well. MOFA intended, therefore, to pursue its direct Central Asia-Japan dialogue, but also to seek ways to bring Russia into this dialogue between Central Asia and Japan. Russia's initial response, Matsuda continued, had been to question Japan's reasons for becoming involved in Central Asia, in the first place. However, during FM Aso's July meeting with Russian FM Lavrov on the margins of the ASEAN meetings in Kuala Lumpur, Japanese officials explained that Tokyo's main goal was not to exclude Moscow, but to present options to Central Asian states, he said.

14. (C) Matsuda asked for U.S. advice on possible subjects that Tokyo might take up with Moscow as part of a newly inaugurated Japan-Russia strategic dialogue that former PM Koizumi and Russian PM Putin had agreed to during their 2005 summit. VFM Shotaro Yachi, in an attempt to demonstrate that Japan considers its relationship with Russia to be on the same level as that of Japan-US or Japan-UK, recently agreed to upgrade the discussion by meeting with Russian VFM Denisov. However, "as is usual with Russia-Japan relations," Matsuda noted, the Russians have been "very slow to articulate subjects" for the meeting.

15. (C) The Russians remain mistrustful of involvement by non-Russians in Central Asia, Feigenbaum agreed. A key

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objective, therefore, might be to reassure Moscow that in pursuing its dialogue with Central Asia, Japan did not necessarily seek to undermine Russia in the region. Noting Matsuda's remark that Japan might include Russia in its Japan-Central Asia dialogue, Feigenbaum cautioned that Japan should also be on guard against any attempt to undermine the Japan-Central Asia dialogue from inside. Despite U.S. reassurances to the contrary, the Kremlin tended to think of Central Asia as a zero-sum game. Russian media likewise often had few nice things to report about U.S. and Western involvement in Central Asia. However, with regard to Central Asia in a Japan-Russia dialogue, Japan might focus on subjects related to what should be common goals, such as promoting economic stability, and cross-national issues such as narcotrafficking and anti-terrorism.

16. (C) Japan, Matsuda said, also planned to raise its concerns about Russia's weapons trade with India and Southeast Asia. Russia had been looking to sell arms in that part of the world because it has lost some of its old customers, he opined. However, Tokyo did not like seeing Asia-Pacific countries buying weapons from Russia.

17. (C) Matsuda added that Russia and China demonstrated little support for Japan's efforts to obtain observer status in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). Feigenbaum asked what SCO actually does, noting that Washington believes informal coordination among Central Asian leaders and others is always welcome, but that the U.S. remained wary of some aspects of the SCO.

18. (U) DAS Feigenbaum has cleared this message.
DONOVAN